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## [I am Navy Medicine: Capt. Jonathan M. Stahl, DC](#)

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I serve as a full-time biomedical researcher at the Naval Medical Research Unit in San Antonio (NAMRU-SA).

#### *A few words from a Navy Medicine Research Dentist*

Just over twenty years ago as a new dental officer on my first tour in the Navy I remember my department head helping to guide me through a particularly challenging dental procedure on a retired Marine. Shortly after the patient left the clinic my mentor said to me that this particular patient should not be thanking us, we should be thanking him. As the story unfolds, the retiree was a WWII veteran who saw action on both Iwo Jima and Okinawa. That particular event has stuck with me over the years

as a reminder as to the special trust that has been granted to me as a healthcare provider in the armed forces.

I began the process of joining the Navy after talking with a recruiter who visited Northwestern University Dental School in Chicago when I was a third year student. A few years in the Navy after dental school seemed like the ideal first job for me as it offered a sense of adventure and unique experiences that were not to be found in the private sector. I figured as a Navy Dentist I would have opportunities to see a little bit of the world, enhance my clinical skills and possibly be selected for post graduate opportunities that are available to Navy Dental Officers if I was willing to stay in for a little while longer. I did not initially plan on making the military a career, but could not imagine a more fulfilling career to be had at this point.



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As a young dentist I had diverse assignments including serving with the Marines in Japan, a tour on an aircraft carrier, and assignment in Iceland for several years. Through my early tours I focused on honing my clinical skills and learning the art of being an effective leader. There were times when I was not sure which was greater challenge, but over time opportunities to excel in both areas came knocking at my door.

At present I serve as a full-time biomedical researcher at the [Naval Medical Research Unit in San Antonio \(NAMRU-SA\)](#). Navy Dentists have a long tradition of utilizing research to improve the health of service members dating back to 1947 when the first Dental Research facility was established at Great Lakes.



What is most exciting about research is that moment where after spending countless tedious hours in the lab you make a discovery that adds to the greater wealth of scientific knowledge and has the potential to benefit many others in a tangible way.

NAMRU-SA is an extremely exciting place to work that is populated with a talented staff at the forefront of healthcare research with a focus on maintaining a high level operational readiness among Sailors and Marines.

My interest in research was sparked by my exposure to research when I was assigned to residency training in operative dentistry at Indiana University. What is most exciting about research is that moment where after spending countless tedious hours in the lab you make a discovery that adds to the greater wealth of scientific knowledge and has the potential to benefit many others in a tangible way. The Navy sent me to the University of California San Francisco to complete a doctorate in craniofacial research which was an opportunity not even remotely on my radar when I entered the service.



I have been fortunate to work with so many individuals in the Navy, Enlisted and Officers as well as civilians who serve alongside us.

Current research projects at NAMRU-SA are aimed at having a positive impact on the health and readiness of Sailors and Marines through treatment, detection, and prevention of craniofacial disease and injuries. Ongoing projects include efforts to create novel dental resins that will prevent decay around fillings through the incorporation of titanium nanoparticles, creation of nanofibrous wound dressings to

enhance healing and reduce facial scar formation, developing new treatments for multidrug resistant maxillofacial infections, among many others.

I have been fortunate to work with so many individuals in the Navy, Enlisted and Officers as well as civilians who serve alongside us. Many of those individuals have guided me on the path to where I am today. Most importantly, I have never forgotten that sacred trust that as a Dental Corps Officer I have when it comes to taking care of Sailors and Marines.



I'm Capt. Jonathan M. Stahl. I Am Navy Medicine

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